LIVING LIFE WITHOUT STRIFE

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FREE DISTRIBUTION ONLY
Printed and Distributed by All Peoples Church & World Outreach, Bangalore, INDIA.
First Edition Printed: October 2007
Revised Digital Edition: June 2021

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1. WHAT IS STRIFE?

There is strife everywhere—in the family, at the workplace, in ministry, in church, and so on—and it eats away at human relationships. There is probably no facet of life left untouched by this cancerous thing called strife. So, what IS strife? It is division, quarrel, hatred, ill feeling, contention, enmity, or factions between people.

At home, we find strife between the husband and wife, between parents and children, and among siblings—as children we may have fought over toys and as adults we fight about land and money! There is strife in our workplaces, among team members, and between employer and employee. Unfortunately, we find strife in our churches too, sometimes among members of the same congregation. People may sing, "Hallelujah" on Sunday in the church but may not be able to get along with another member in the same congregation. It is really sad to say this, but strife sometimes also exists between ministers of God!

The objectives of this book are to:

- Understand what causes strife,
- Study the negative effects that strife has in our lives,
- Learn how to keep strife out of our lives.

2. WHAT CAUSES STRIFE?

Hatred

Proverbs 10:12
Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.

Hatred causes strife. For example, on your first day at work, as you were being introduced to your new team, you were probably happy. But later you realized that there was this one person on the team with whom there was no "chemistry"—you just could not get along with that person. Initially you tried being civil to him, but slowly began to dislike the person. Later you started avoiding him and even started hating him. This hatred may burst forth one day but until that moment the person may not even have been aware that you disliked him. Thus, your hatred for that person produced strife between you and him.

Anger Or Fiery Temper

Proverbs 15:18
A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays contention.

All of us have the potential to get angry. The feelings—including anger—that build in us must be channeled right. We must be angry about the right kind of things—sin, injustice, and intolerance. But some of us have this fiery thing inside us and even a little thing that someone says or does, causes us to flare up. Our uncontrollable tempers may have caused us more strife than we can imagine. Anger often stirs up strife and causes breakdown of relationships.

Proverbs 29:22
An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression.

Proverbs 30:33
For as the churning of milk produces butter, And wringing the nose produces blood, So the forcing of wrath produces strife.

Proverbs 30:33 in literal Hebrew reads: "*The pressure of milk produces curds, the pressure of the nose produces blood, the pressure of wrath* i.e., *brooding over and, as it were, condensing it produces strife*."

Gossiping, Backbiting, And Talebearing

Proverbs 26:20
Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.

A talebearer, a gossiper, a whisperer, or a slanderer causes strife. For example, consider the case of two good friends. Assume when one friend is away on a holiday someone else backbites about him to his good friend. When the friend returns, he finds his friend behaving totally different. This is because there was a gossiper around. Likewise, when we unintentionally gossip about people, we are sowing seeds of strife that eat away at relationships between people. So, we have to be careful when we speak about other people.

Proverbs 16:28
A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends.

Being Contentious Or Quarrelsome

Proverbs 26:21
As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife.

With a contentious man, whatever we say or do causes him to get angry. Something that is part of his personality causes him to be contentious and creates strife that breaks down relationships with everyone else. It is not because other people are wrong, but because something is wrong in him that causes him to be contentious.

Pride

Proverbs 28:25
He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the Lord will be prospered.

Let us consider the instance of a team in a conference room discussing how a project must be carried out. Assuming you are part of that team and you are prejudiced that your team leader has not graduated from a top university like you have, and you feel resentful that he, instead of you, is handing out instructions for the job to be done. Your pride is unwilling to make you submit to his authority because you think you would do a better job than him. This causes strife. All of us will cause strife in our relationships with others if we are too proud to accept someone else's better ideas or refuse to accept someone else's ways of doing things, merely because it is different from our ways.

Selfish Ambition

Luke 22:20–27
20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.
21 But behold, the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table.
22 And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"
23 Then they began to question among themselves, which of them it was who would do this thing.
24 Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.
25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'
26 But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.
27 For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.

At possibly Jesus' last meal with His disciples, as preparation for His crucifixion, He intentionally instituted the Lord's Supper. He tried to get his disciples to understand that He was going to be crucified and about to leave them. But observe what really concerned the apostles when they heard about Jesus going away. There arose a dispute among the disciples as to who would be the next "boss" after Jesus! These were the very same apostles who had been with Jesus all along and had heard Him preach, teach, and perform miracles. Their dispute caused strife among themselves.

Notice how Jesus answered them on who is greater. He explained to them that they had understood it all wrong. He told them that they may be looking at the world and modeling themselves around what they saw in the world. Jesus told them that the person at the top may be the boss in the eyes of the world, but their role model should be a servant, who IS the leader in God's eyes. He told them to find out among themselves who was going to be the least, because that person was the one who was going to be their leader. Thus, selfish ambitions can cause strife.

Misunderstanding

Acts 6:1
Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

There was strife within the church in Jerusalem. The reason being that the Greek-speaking Jews (the Hellenists) complained about the Hebrew-speaking Jews because their widows were being neglected in the distribution of food every day. They brought this issue to the attention of the apostles and asked them to solve their problem. The reason for the strife was the misunderstanding that they were not being paid as much attention as was being given to another sect.

Personality Differences

Acts 15:36–41
36 Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing."
37 Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.
38 But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.
39 Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;
40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.
41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

2 Timothy 4:11
Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

Personality differences too can produce strife because each one of us has a different kind of personality and we do things differently. We see strife between the apostles—Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:36–41). On their first missionary journey together, they took a young man named John Mark with them, who was Barnabas' nephew. John Mark was from an affluent home (the book of Acts records that his mother had a big home where people met for prayer). He must have been used to the comforts of his home but had to travel with Barnabas and Paul in ships and probably on donkeys' backs too. After a while, John Mark felt he was not up to all the hard work and quit, to go back home. Paul never forgot that incident. So, when Paul and Barnabas were getting ready to go on their second missionary journey and Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them, Paul refused to allow that because he remembered what had happened on their first journey.

Barnabas was a compassionate and merciful man who believed in giving people second chances. But Paul was unwilling to do so. Personality differences thus caused strife. But Paul in his older years, probably after he had mellowed down a bit, told Timothy, "*Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry*" (2 Timothy 4:11). John Mark too by then had matured spiritually.

Factions And Cliques

1 Corinthians 3:3–5
3 For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?
4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?
5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?

There were factions inside the church at Corinth. One group claimed that they were the "Paul-kind" of Christians and another the "Apollos-kind" of Christians. Thus, one group supported Paul and another Apollos, within the same church. God had used Paul to raise the church. But over a period, cliques were formed in the church and as a result there was strife and division.

Paul rebuked them because they were still carnal and behaving like ordinary people. He told them that it was not right for some to say they belonged to Paul while others said they belonged to Apollos. He told them that Paul and Apollos were just ministers of God, through whom they had believed in Jesus. It was neither Paul nor Apollos, but GOD who is MASTER.

We too, as a body of believers need to be of the same mind—the church is not about us, or one person or the other person but only about JESUS. We should never get to a place where we say, "We are of Pastor," or "We are of this leader," or "We are of that minister," for if that happened, it would be an opportunity for strife to come into the body. When we look around at churches and ministries all around the world, we find that the major reason for some churches being destroyed is that people begin to support certain ministers and put down certain others. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:21 "*Let no man glory in man* …" If all of us can keep our eyes focused on Jesus Christ, and not on a man of God or some leader in the church, we will grow strong and stay steady and united as a body. Of course, we do have to respect the authority of leaders placed in the Church, but we have to realize that these leaders are only ministers through whom GOD is ministering to us. If someone asks you whom you support or prefer in your local church, do not say, "Pastor" but say "JESUS."

Keeping our eyes on Jesus, we will go the extra mile, and cover the distance that God has for us—His Body—and nothing can separate us. What amazes me is when pastors are able to keep the church together without any divisions. Very often, we have heard pastors or ministers say that they have had two or three splits within their churches. There has been only one pastor so far who has told me, that there have been no splits in his church. I would like to see All Peoples Church that way—grow as big as God has called us to be, have many leaders and ministers of God ministering together, but to stay focused on JESUS and not on any pastor, leader, or believer.

Galatians 5:19–21
19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,
20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,
21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Romans 8:8
So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Disputing Over Speculative Ideas

1 Timothy 6:3–5
3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,
4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,
5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

Disputing and arguing over words and opinions that are really not in the Word of God is one more cause for strife. People in churches sometimes argue about silly things. For example, some argue what the "right way"—forward or backward while immersing in water—to baptize people is. They cite historians of the Bible saying that they baptized in a particular way. I would say that so long as a person goes under water and comes out alive, he is baptized! Instead of fighting over people's opinions, let us concentrate and agree on the wholesome Word of God which cannot be disputed about, and leave aside people's opinions. Withdraw yourself from speculative ideas. And if certain doctrines in the Word of God are not clear, let us just live out what we do understand of the Word.

Foolish Questions

2 Timothy 2:23–25
23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.
24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,
25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.

Avoid foolish and ignorant questions because they only generate strife. For example, you may decide to witness to your college friend, John, who is from a Christian background but is not a believer yet, and you ask him gently why he does not attend church. He immediately retorts and asks you if you are one of those "born-again types." Assume he also tells you that if you can tell him where Cain and Abel got their wives from, he would listen to all that you have to share. That question stumps you and you begin asking God for wisdom to answer that. You may then decide to tell your friend that probably Cain and Abel married their sisters, and he may scoff at that. You may get upset and walk out on him.

Thus, it is wise to avoid questions that stir up strife. Paul warns us that servants of God must keep away from strife. You do not have to know the answers to all the questions pertaining to the Bible. Answering such questions will in fact lead John to ask you another

question which in turn may lead to heated arguments and probably break up your friendship with him. Instead, it would be wise to tell John that you could tell him something that would be far more useful to him and then share about Christ's love for him.

3. The Negative Effects Of Strife

James 3:16
For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

Opens The Door To Confusion And Every Evil Work

The Bible says, where there is envy, selfish ambition, and self-seeking, strife is present. When we get into strife with somebody, we are opening the door to confusion and every evil work. It amounts to opening the door and telling satan to come in and have a party! We would be giving satan free access into our lives to do whatever he wants—damage our bodies with sicknesses, create confusion in our businesses and families, cause depression, failure, lack of finances, and so on. Every demonic work exists when we get into strife.

For instance, if a church allows strife to enter in, it is highly likely that the church will disintegrate soon. Satan will take the opportunity to get into that church and begin working all kinds of evil within that congregation, to destroy them. In the same way, if strife enters a marriage, owing to the conflicts between husband and wife, satan will destroy that home. All of us have conflicts, though some might think there are no conflicts in certain marriages. My wife, Amy, and I too have our share. So, if we do not do our utmost to keep strife out of our lives, we can be sure that the enemy will enter and disintegrate our marriages and devastate lives.

Thus, we should always ask God to help us live our lives without strife, immaterial of what others say or do. If we do not want any evil thing to enter our lives, we ought to guard ourselves from this cancerous thing called strife.

4. Keeping Strife Out Of Your Life

Everybody experiences strife! All of us have moments when we can get into strife with people, but strife is such a dangerous thing, and we must do our utmost to keep it out of our lives.

Proverbs 17:1
Better is a dry morsel with quietness, Than a house full of feasting with strife.

It is better to live in a small place with a little dry morsel than live in a big house where there is feasting and fanfare that show signs of happiness but where there is only strife.

Proverbs 20:3
It is honorable for a man to stop striving, Since any fool can start a quarrel.

It is an honor to avoid strife because any fool can get into trouble. It does not take much intelligence to start a quarrel, but it is an honor when a man of character or a woman of dignity decides not to get into a quarrel.

Proverbs 20:3, Message Bible
It's a mark of good character to avert quarrels, but fools love to pick fights.

It is a mark of good character to keep strife out.

Do Not Give Strife A Chance

Proverbs 17:14, Message Bible
The start of a quarrel is like a leak in a dam, so stop it before it bursts.

For example, in a conversation with a friend over a cup of coffee, we may have been talking on various topics and begun discussing about who the best cricketer was. We may have said "Sachin" and the friend may have suggested other names, and the discussion carried on. But we also may have noticed that the "temperature" has risen. From a casual, good mannered, and well-meaning discussion, the conversation may have turned intense. It seemed to be headed for a serious debate! Maybe even a quarrel. In such a case, the moment we feel the temperature rising, it would be wise to stop the discussion right there. We must change the subject and start talking about something else. We need to know when to get out of such situations. When we see a leak in the dam, we need to fix it before the dam bursts. Let us not give strife a chance!

Mind Your Own Business

Minding our own business may seem simple but sometimes an exceedingly difficult thing to do. We need to think of what we must do and let others think of what they need to do. This avoids strife in relationships.

Proverbs 26:17
He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a dog by the ears.

Often on the streets of our cities in India, we come across two people on the roadside quarrelling about something no one else knows about. For instance, assume one day while we were traveling by the roadside and saw one such quarrel. Though we were total strangers to the people fighting on the roadside yet feeling like we ought to be the "chief justice" for that situation, we may have listened to both sides of the quarrel. Then suddenly before we realized it, we may have rolled up our sleeves and got involved in the fight. Later, we wondered how or why we got involved in the fight. That is asking for unnecessary trouble. The Bible warns us of this very thing saying, "*meddling in a quarrel that is not ours*" is like a man taking a dog by the ears.

"*Do not strive with a man without a cause if he has done you no harm"* (Proverbs 3:30)—this is common sense and also mentioned in the book of Proverbs—as is the case of two people fighting on the road who had not done us any wrong but to whom we had wanted to administer justice! But for such cases, it would have been far wiser to get a policeman, if we were desperate to help them. Also, it makes good sense to stay out of somebody else's problem. We need to always mind our own business and try to never get into trouble that is not ours!

Watch Your Motives

Many times, our motives may be wrong. When we are motivated by strife, we will get into trouble.

Philippians 2:3
Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

We must not do anything motivated by strife. For example, if someone sent us a mail that upset us, let us not decide to send that person a virus the next day! If we did so, we would only be giving strife a big foothold in our lives.

James 4:1-2
1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

There are wars and fights among us when we do wrong things with wrong motives. So, we always need to check our motives and guard them. If our motives are to get back at somebody for what they did to us, that is motivated by strife and we ought not to do it.

Watch Your Words

We need to be careful with our words.

Proverbs 18:6
A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows.

Speaking foolish words can get us into strife and we could very well deserve good blows for that. Foolish words get people into contention and hence we must watch the words we speak.

Proverbs 22:10
Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; Yes, strife and reproach will cease.

A scoffer is a person who can say nothing but critical words. One always seems to bump into these kinds of people. For example, assume that when you started work in a new company, you were introduced to this person whom you thought was "admirable," for having worked there for 25 years. He said he was the "old horse" in the company who knew everything that went on there. He then began ranting about all the negative events that happened there. He seemed like he had nothing good to tell you! You wondered why he would stick on to such a job for 25 years, after hearing all his complaints about everybody else in the company. The Bible says that such a person creates a lot of strife and we are to cast him out. Then contention and strife will also be rid of.

Our words can often get us into trouble. So, we need to watch our words. Sometimes even the remarks we make in a lighter vein can create strife. We may have made fun of the color of our friends' hair, but those words said in jest may have insulted them, thus causing hurt. They probably spent a lot of money to get that color on their hair, so what we said may have insulted them. It could have even cost us their friendship. So, we have to be careful and wise with our words, to be sure that we do not get into trouble. Taking care of these simple things ensures there is no cause for strife!

Control Your Temper

Proverbs 15:18
A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention.

A wrathful man—an angry man—stirs up strife! But he who is slow to anger allays contention! When I first got saved, at the age of 12, though I was just growing in my Christian faith, I had a very serious problem with an "out-of-control" temper! While I was playing football, a game I loved, at school one day, one of the boys tripped me. I became so angry, turned around, did not even look to see who it had been, and kicked him hard on his back. Little did I realize then that he was also a believer and we were even part of the same prayer group! That was the end of my friendship with him. Though we were both believers, we had lost our cool. I had lost my temper and hurt him in such a way that he probably never forgot about it. And I had to repent about it during the following days. That friend could have helped me a lot, in my walk with God, but I lost a friend because I could not control my temper.

Proverbs 16:32
He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

If we can rule our tempers, we would be considered better than Arnold Schwarzenegger! We would have more strength than him because the Bible says that if we are slow to anger, we are better than the mighty! And he who rules his spirit is better than he who takes a city! I tell myself that if I can control my temper, I am better than being strong and better than a man who can conquer a city. I used to repeat Proverbs 16:32 to myself often, to help cool off and get my anger under control. So, if you and I can control our anger, we can keep strife out of our lives!

Proverbs 25:8
Do not go hastily to court; For what will you do in the end, When your neighbor has put you to shame?

Develop the Ability to Ignore Insults

Proverbs 12:16
A fool's wrath is known at once, But a prudent man covers shame.

A fool's wrath is known at once. If he is insulted, he will retaliate right away! He does not need time to think about it. But a prudent man is somebody who will cover an insult. He will not respond but will forget it! Develop the ability to ignore insults. Insults do not change who we are unless we react negatively to them. They are just people's opinions. If we know that who we are in Christ is who we really are, it will not matter when others insult us.

1 Peter 2:23
Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.

When Jesus was insulted, He did not retaliate, and we have to follow His example. We ought to ignore insults and allow it to go like water off a duck's back. Then we will be able to keep our tempers in control and not be agitated.

Develop the Ability to Respond With Gentleness

Proverbs 15:1
A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

For example, when someone ready to start a fight approaches you, and you feel as if there are fumes coming out of that person's mouth and their words seem red hot and ready to spurt out against you, just remain calm. For when you have responded to them with a soft answer, you have kept yourself out of strife. A soft answer indeed turns away wrath! But most of us tend to respond quite the opposite way. In a disagreement, we always try to outdo the other person—in loudness or in intensity—and this only serves to escalate the whole situation. That is why the Bible says that a soft answer turns away wrath. Even if the other person is angry, we should choose to respond with gentleness.

2 Timothy 2:24
And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient.

The Bible also instructs us that as servants of God, we must not quarrel but must be gentle to all people, able to teach, and be patient. So, we must develop the ability to respond with gentleness. We should always give a tender reply and a soft answer in heated situations. Many times, it just cools things down and helps keep strife out of our lives.

Yielding

We must develop the ability to yield. Many times, we are so stubborn about the wrong things—the things that really do not matter—and our stubbornness causes strife in our lives! Consider the example of Abraham and Lot (Genesis 13:1–18).

Lot was Abraham's nephew. On their journey to the land that God was going to give Abraham, both had huge livestock and a great number of servants. And often their respective servants quarreled and fought with each other! There was a lot of strife throughout their journey! Abraham realized what was happening and told Lot that it was not good to go on like this in their journey and so he asked Lot to take whichever part of the countryside he wanted to and said that he himself would go the opposite way. He literally yielded to Lot by telling him to take whatever he wanted of the land!

Lot had looked all around, saw the wonderful plains of Sodom and Gomorrah, and chose to go there, since that part was fertile. He took all his livestock and people, and they moved into Sodom and Gomorrah. And right after Lot departed, God told Abraham to

arise and walk through the land. God said He would give to Abraham every part of the land that his feet treaded upon. And since that time, his livestock increased greatly. Even Abraham's servant acknowledged that God had blessed his master. Whereas for Lot who went into Sodom and Gomorrah, everything was destroyed and he himself had to run for his life with just the clothes he was wearing! Remember it was Abraham who had yielded!

So, we also need to learn to let go! For example, if there is a dispute over a family-owned apartment, and you are being given less than your actual share of it, just yield and accept what is given. You could either be stubborn and fight, and keep strife as your "friend" to ensure you get your actual share of the property or you could let strife stay out of the door by yielding! By doing so, the blessings of God will come into your life!

When we befriend strife, the heavens are shut. There will be no blessings. Instead, if we keep strife out of the door, God can really pour out His blessings. That is what happened to Abraham. The day Lot left, God told Abraham that everything else was his, and that God was his friend, and He would be with him in all things. God multiplied what seemed a poor bargain for Abraham and turned it into a great blessing. When Lot had looked at one side of the land, and saw it was "devalued," he chose the fertile plains. He let Abraham have what he thought was not really of great value! But God was with Abraham. So, we need to learn to yield, with the sole objective of keeping strife out and we will see the blessing of God.

Meekness Is Not Weakness

Psalm 37:11
But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Meekness is really strength in disguise. The Bible says that the meek will inherit the earth. A Sunday newspaper carried an article that says that the meek will not inherit the earth. But the Bible still holds that the meek will inherit the earth. Maybe people have not lived long enough to see it happen. God will never fail, and His Word is true. The meek WILL inherit the earth.

Make Peace Quickly

Matthew 5:9,25-26
9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.
25 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.
26 Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

Hebrews 12:14
Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

Romans 12:18
If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Jesus instructed us to agree with our adversaries quickly before they take us to court and got a judge to pass the sentence. We should always be peacemakers, yielding, or letting go. So long as our objective is to keep strife out and if by yielding, we can do that, the blessings of God are sure to follow us in our lives! What we might lose by yielding, God can give us many times over through His blessings!

Do Not Keep An Account Of Wrongs

Do not keep an account of the wrongs that people have done. For example, when you are casually talking to somebody, suddenly that person accuses you of some wrong you did to him 25 years ago. You had long forgotten but he has not. He may not only remember the day the offense occurred, but also the time and everything about you that day.

The Bible says that love "*does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil*" (1 Corinthians 13:5). Love takes no account of evil, or does it keep score of the sins of others. So, if we want to lead a strife-free life, we must learn to keep other people's slates clean every day! We ought not to keep an account of what they have done against us! This will keep strife out of our lives.

Proverbs 17:9
He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends.

Forgive Liberally and Forgive Quickly

Matthew 5:23-24
23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,
24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

We lose and destroy friendships when we repeat a matter that is in the past. We need to forget what is past and let go of it or else, we will destroy the friendship. If we cover an offense, it means we are really going after love. We need to forgive quickly and forgive liberally. Jesus said that if we go to God in prayer and realize that somebody has done something wrong against us, we must settle that first before we begin to pray. So, if we settle a matter as and when it happens, we can pray anytime. This means that if instead of forgiving immediately we keep a long score, we will have a lot of running around to do, seeking forgiveness before we can even start praying. We must release forgiveness as and when the offense occurs, forget it, settle it, and close the case—wipe the slate clean! Then, we are ready to pray anytime. When Peter came to Jesus asking, "*Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him,*

"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22).

It probably was John the beloved disciple who was troubling Peter a lot, and Peter could not handle it anymore. So, he decided to discuss it with Jesus and probably without mentioning the name of the offender, he asked Jesus how many times he was supposed to forgive someone. Jesus knew what was happening. So, when Peter asked Him if he had to forgive seven times, Jesus answered, "Seventy times seven." In other words, Jesus was telling Peter to be liberal and to keep on forgiving. We ought not to keep an account of wrongs, and if we can do that, we will have no reason to get into strife with people. For all is forgiven!

Bind Demonic Operation

Ephesians 6:12
For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Strife and confusion can also be caused by demonic activity. Though most times, we are responsible for the strife in our lives, there are times when strife and confusion in our relationships can be directly caused because of what the devil is trying to do! We may have done nothing wrong, and others too may have done nothing wrong, but we find something wrong happening in our relationships! Things are not going the way it was supposed to go! In this case, it is highly likely that the devil is trying to destroy that relationship. The spirit of strife comes in, trying to work at breaking that relationship! This is where we need to rise up with our God-given authority and use the sword of the Spirit! We must speak the Word of God and declare peace in that relationship—declaring that it is a Kingdom-relationship where there is righteousness, peace, and joy. We must always say, "We will not tolerate strife or division to come into any relationship!" We can take our God-given authority and keep the spirits of strife out of all our relationships! This we need to do to maintain peace.

The Challenge

As Individuals

Romans 13:12–14
12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.
13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.
14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

As individuals, we are called to keep strife out of our lives. The day is at hand! Therefore, let us get rid of the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. How do we do that? The Word of God says we ought to walk decently. What does it mean to walk decently? We should walk like we walk in the daytime, rid of all the works of darkness, even strife. We are people of the day not of the night! We have to walk decently and put on Jesus! All of us can make the choice to live a life without strife. There are going to be many opportunities for strife with our friends, neighbors, and those we live with! For example, in our apartments, when our neighbors turn on their music loud, we may react by turning our music on louder. We should instead choose not to respond in a way that can create strife.

It is a challenge for all of us! We have to keep telling ourselves, "Immaterial of what happens, what other people say or do, how many opportunities for strife may come our way, we are going to live our lives without strife!"

As a Body

Psalm 133:1–3
1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!
2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.
3 It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the Lord commanded the blessing—Life forevermore.

Even in our churches there should be NO strife. Where there is zero strife, we will experience the anointing and freshness of God. The dew will be there, so also life, blessing, and peace. It is up to us to have a church like that! We ought to ensure we are a body of people without any strife—where everyone walks in love, peace, and harmony. Everyone must understand the importance of keeping strife out of our lives. If an issue arises, we should immediately settle it, forgive, forget, and not repeat it! Record only the good things—the successes, the things that got accomplished. Forget the failures and the negatives. Forget people's mistakes and let those mistakes be erased. Because the Bible says that God puts our sins in the depths of the sea, never to remember them! If God does not remember our sins, why should we take the trouble to remember those things? We can use our memory cells for something positive!

REPENTANCE AND PRAYER

Some of us do things that are motivated by strife! But we can change that! Pray: "*God, as I stand in your presence, I humble my heart. I realize that some of the things that I am doing is really motivated by strife! But I want to change that*!"

For those of us who may be very loose with our words—saying things without realizing we are actually hurting people, and that is the reason we are losing a lot of our friends, we can pray: "*God, I want to be more careful with my words*."

Some of us might have a very fiery temper, are easily angered, and we lose control. But the Word of God says that if we can control our anger, we are better than a man who can rule a city. Ask the Lord: "*God, give me the grace to bring my temper in subjection to the Holy Spirit. Give me the ability to ignore insults because it does not change who I am unless I respond negatively. Even when someone speaks rudely, Lord, give me the grace to respond with gentleness. Give me the grace to yield and let go, for my stubbornness to hold onto things causes strife. When strife leaves my life, blessings will come. God! Bring about this change in my life so that I can live a life that is totally strife-free.*"

Some of us have a good memory of keeping score of the wrongs that people have done. Ask God: "*Lord, I ask that you erase my memory clean and help me let go of the records of wrong, that others have done me*."

Husbands and wives! There is always opportunity for strife and conflict in every marriage. It is up to us to say at the end of every day that we will wipe our spouses' slate clean and not keep account of wrongs done. Pray: "*God, work in us and bring about a change in our hearts.*"

As a result of repentance and prayer, there would be healing and mending of broken relationships that have long been that way. There would be peace, harmony, and good understanding not just in our hearts, but also in all the relationships in our lives. Let the work that GOD has done affect all those broken relationships, to bring restoration, peace, and joy, because God has changed our hearts!

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All Peoples Church ministers beyond its own borders as a local church by reaching out all across India, especially North India, with a special focus on (A) Strengthening Leaders, (B) Equipping young people for ministry and (C) Building up the Body of Christ. Several training seminars for young people, and Christian Leaders conferences are held throughout the year. In addition, several thousands of copies of publications are distributed free of cost in English and other Indian languages with the purpose of equipping believers in the Word and in the Spirit.

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About All Peoples Church

At All Peoples Church (APC), our vision is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore and a voice to the nation of India and to the nations of the world.

At APC, we are committed to presenting the complete, uncompromised Word of God in the anointing and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We believe that good music, creative presentations, brilliant apologetics, contemporary ministry techniques, latest technology and so on, can never substitute the God-ordained approach of proclaiming the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Hebrews 2:3-4). Our theme is Jesus, our content is the Word, our method is Holy Spirit power, our passion is people, and our goal is Christlike maturity.

With our main base in Bangalore, All Peoples Church has several other church locations in India. To get a current listing and contact information of All Peoples Church locations, please visit our website at **www.apcwo.org/locations** or send an email to **contact@apcwo.org**.

DO YOU KNOW THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus did many miracles on the Earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

All of these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.

So why then would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But, the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, *"***For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).** Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world when He died on the cross. Then, three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and then went back into heaven.

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him whole-heartedly.

"… through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

… "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, you shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.

Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.

Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins..

Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You.
Amen.

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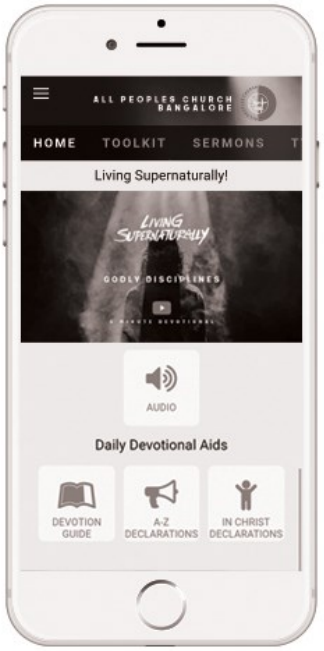

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To **apply online**, and for more information about the college, curriculum, eligibility criteria, tuition costs and to download the application form, please visit: **apcbiblecollege.org**

APC-BC is accredited by the Nations Association for Theological Accreditation (NATA).

There is strife everywhere—in the family, at the workplace, in ministry, in church, and so on—and it eats away at human relationships. There is probably no facet of life left untouched by this cancerous thing called strife.

So, what IS strife? It is division, quarrel, hatred, ill feeling, contention, enmity, or factions between people.

The objectives of this book are to understand what causes strife, study the negative effects that strife has in our lives, and learn how to keep strife out of our lives.

Ashish Raichur

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